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Anarchism versus Revolutionary Socialism

Freedom Press

August 1, 1890

Regarding the election or appointment of directors or administrators in 9, communal society, I need say little. That such will always be necessary where society and industry, exist, I believe. That it is advisable, even if it were possible, that the persons required to direct social and industrial concerns could always be appointed on the moment, I fail to see. Nor can I understand how it is possible that in every am such appointments would meet with the approval of everybody. The same reasoning that applies to laws and majorities applies to this matter also. I heartily agree with you, however, in thinking that foremen and overseers such as we have today will be almost, if not entirely, unnecessary. The teaching of this forms part of our Socialist propaganda.

In conclusion, let me say that, so far as the practical realization of our ideas are concerned, I can see no real difference between Anarchist Communists and Communists or Socialists like myself and my comrades in the Socialist League. The discussion of our differences, whenever the points are closely pursued, reveals the fact that our dispute is more about what we do

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not mean than what we do mean. Anarchists ring the changes by applying the terms " law " and " authority,- with their full historical and claw oppression significance attached to them.

For the first and second parts of Comrade Glasier's objections to Anarchism and our replies see Freedom for June and July. Every-day reasonable regulations that Socialists believe would be required in a free communal system and Socialists retort that Anarchists would have everybody roaming about society resolved of his own sweet will to do nothing, and in perpetual dread of being compelled to do something, while in reality the conceptions of both, when divested of ambiguous words, are substantially the cause.

I need not say that, in speaking of Socialism, I do not refer to any system of what is termed "State" Socialism, whether as a temporary expedient or a final social arrangement, or that in speaking of Anarchism I do not refer to the ideas of Anarchists who are not Communists, but Individualists.

-Yours fraternally,

J. Bruce Glaiser

250, Crown Street, Glasgow.

The concluding portion of our comrade's letter does not call for a lengthy reply. In the last portion of his first paragraph he rather contradicts what he says in the opening sentences. For our position on the matter we refer him to the next installment of "Society on the morrow of the Revolution." We may add that we quite see it may sometimes be necessary for an arrangement to be come to whereby an individual will do work somewhat resembling certain work done by foremen and overseers to-day. For instance, today it may be part of the duty of a foreman of a smithy to see about the proper supply of material. That sort of work may be done by a special individual after the Revolution, as now. But that individual will not be at all like the foreman of today He will be rather a kind of clerk or storekeeper. Anarchists have never proposed to play cricket without captains, or navigate vessels without officers—that is to say, experts in

the management of ships. But they do propose that such necessary leaders or experts should be deprived of the power to arbitrarily punish those who are not of their opinion, and they do not we that, in the majority of cases, there is any necessity for foremen and overseers in factories and workshops.

Certainly the differences between Socialists and Anarchists are often magnified, and especially by the unscrupulous politicians of the Social Democratic school; but our friend Glaiser must be convinced by what we have already said that there are very real differences between his ideas and ours. The matter was put very neatly in the course of a discussion, the other evening, at the Berners Street Club. Mowbray, of the Socialist League, said he was a Communist first and an Anarchist afterwards, because he believed economic liberty would lead to political liberty. Pearson, of the Freedom Group, said he was an Anarchist first and a Communist afterwards, because he believed that we could not have economical liberty until we had first won political liberty. That is just it. We are Communists, as Glaiser is, and, like him, we advocate Communism; but we also know that to bring about the Revolution it is necessary to strike at the root of the evil, and we gay Government, in its various forms and institutions, is the cause and the support of monopoly and the present evil condition of society. Therefore we attack it first and foremost, and think it of primary importance that the worker should learn that Government must be done away with before he can have Communism-before he can be free.

Our comrade sap his Socialism is not State Socialism, but we do not me how he can logically take up a position in which he is neither for the State nor against it. He also confuses the relation between Anarchism and Communism by speaking of the anarchy of Individualists as opposed to that of Communists. Anarchism itself is precisely the same thing, whether it is advocated by Individualist, Collectivist, or Communist; whether its advocates seek to obtain it by revolutionary or gradual meth-

ods. The difference between these schools of thought is not in their demand for liberty, but in their views as regards the Organization of production and the sharing of produce, and the method of obtaining the common end-Anarchism.

Conclusion of Bruce Glasier's Letter.*